

BELMONT MILL, SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE  
(Nevada Belmont Mill)  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest  
Service Road No. 623  
Ely vicinity  
White Pine County  
Nevada

HAER NV-46-H  
*HAER NV-46-H*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

### BELMONT MILL, SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

HAER No. NV-46-H

Location: Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest Service Road No. 623, Ely vicinity, White Pine County, Nevada.  
U.S. Geological Survey, Seligman Canyon, Nevada, 7.5 Quadrangle (1992), Township 16 North, Range 57 East, Section 1.  
UTM Zone 11, Easting 2060788.38, Northing 14266780.48 (southeast corner of building) (NAD 83).  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Feature No. F3.

Significance: The Tonopah Belmont Development Company (TBDC) was one of the most important companies created during Nevada's early twentieth-century mining boom. As ore deposits in its central Nevada mines were depleted, the company sought new claims to resurrect its fortunes. In 1926 TBDC built the Belmont Mill near Hamilton to process lead and silver ore from its recently acquired claims in the White Pine mining district of eastern Nevada. The small pilot mill employed the most recent advances in table concentration and flotation mineral processing techniques, and the company erected numerous other buildings and structures to support the mining and milling work, including the mill supervisor's office. The site was largely abandoned by TBDC after a few years, but later owners used the mill and associated structures for smaller operations. Today, although most of the equipment has been removed, the Belmont Mill site is one of the only intact early twentieth-century mill complexes in eastern Nevada. The mill complex is a tangible reminder of the decline and failure of a once-powerful company and, thereby, of the boom and bust cycle so common in the mining industry. The subsequent modification and reuse of the site for small-scale operations typifies the ceaseless hum of optimism that sustains the mining industry.

Description: The rectangular, gable-roofed supervisor's office is located in the canyon bottom about 15' south of the assay office (NV-46-G) and 100' south of the mill (NV-46-A) at the base of the steep hill that rises immediately to the west. It measures 48'-2" north to south and 16'-3" east to west. The shingle-clad south part of the building is the original while the shingled and wood-sided north part is an addition. A small shed-roofed room was likely added on the west side of the original building at the same time. The additions probably occurred in 1952 or 1953, when the office was converted to a residence.

The supervisor's office appears to have no foundation; horizontal boards cover the crawlspace but it is assumed that the floor joists are raised on posts set directly on the ground as with the assay office. The wood-framed 2" x 4" walls of the south section are sheathed with horizontal 1" x 12" boards, followed by a layer of tarred paper and 16"

wood shingles of varying widths, painted grey. The east wall of the north addition is sheathed and finished similarly, but the north and west walls are clad in coved drop siding with a 7" exposure and finished with cornerboards. The small room on the west side is also clad in drop siding.

The wood-framed roofs are of similar pitch, although the roof height of the original building is lower. The original building has widely spaced wood sheathing and is covered with wood shingles, although corrugated metal was used to repair a small section on the west side of the roof. On the east and west walls, the eaves comprise plain frieze boards with a strip of molding at the top, a canted soffit formed by the last board of the roof sheathing, and a narrow canted fascia nailed to the edge of this. The gable ends are treated similarly, and all elements are painted white. One metal stovepipe projects just west of the ridge toward the south end of the roof. Two other stovepipes were present, one directed through the west wall of the original building (still present) and the other through the west wall of the north addition (now missing).

The roofs of the north addition and the small west addition are fully sheathed with boards, followed by a layer of building paper and a covering of asphalt roll roofing. The eaves of the east and west walls have exposed rafter tails and a frieze board notched under the rafters, while the north and south walls have plain rakeboards and soffits formed by the roof sheathing. All elements are painted white.

Presently, the wood-framed windows of the south section include a group of five six-over-six-light, single-hung windows with plain board trim, canted sills, and aprons; two one-by-one-light sliding sash windows with plain trim, sills, and aprons, and metal flashing above (one in the south wall and one in the west wall); and one casement window in the center of the south wall that lights the bathroom. Historic photographs (see Figures 3 and 4 in HAER No. NV-46) and physical evidence make it clear that only the sliding sash windows are original: the original fenestration comprised one set at the north end of the east wall, one set in the south wall, and two sets in the west wall (the remnants of the north set are visible in the small closet addition on the west side). A door or window may also have been present in the north wall, but this side of the building is not visible in the photos. The north addition has four six-over-six-light, single-hung wood windows (two in the east wall and one each on the north and west walls) with trim, sills, aprons, and metal flashing matching the south section.

The south section of the supervisor's office has one doorway in the east wall; the door is missing but the plain trim and metal flashing at the door head remain, and all wood elements were originally painted white. Marks on the doorframe indicate the location of a screen door. The north addition has a single doorway in the west wall at the north end; it too has plain trim and metal flashing and white paint, but again the door is missing. At some point the opening was covered with building paper, presumably in an effort at weatherproofing.

Before the supervisor's office was converted to a residence, it comprised two rooms of roughly equal size in the original south section. Presently this interior is divided into three rooms: a kitchen in the south half, a living room in the north half, and a bathroom walled off from the west side of the living room. The north addition provided a fourth room, most likely a bedroom, while the small west addition provided closet or storage space opening from the south wall of the bedroom.

On the interior, the south section originally had a floor of 3-1/4" tongue-and-groove boards oriented north to south. In the kitchen and living room, this was later covered with 9" x 9" squares of linoleum, marbled in dark grey and white, with a narrow, light grey band of trim one row in from the edge of the room and occasional light gray squares as accents. The wood floor in the bathroom was covered with a sheet of resilient flooring, much deteriorated but apparently marbled pink and green originally. The north wall of the kitchen, including the pantry, is finished with vertical beadboard paneling, 3-1/4" wide, while the other walls and the ceiling are finished with a heavy, pressed wood board with battens at the joints. The wide wood baseboard has a molded top, identical to that used in the assay office. All elements are painted yellow (with traces of pale blue paint beneath it) except the trim on the north wall, which is painted pale pinkish-brown. All of the living room and bathroom walls are finished with beadboard except the east living room wall and west bathroom wall, which were reconfigured in about 1953 and are now finished with plywood. The baseboard on the living room walls is the same as that used in the kitchen. The ceilings are finished with pressed wood board and battens. Walls and ceilings are painted light blue while living room trim is pale brown. All fixtures have been removed from the kitchen and bathroom, although remnants of plumbing make it clear that the kitchen sink was located along the west wall while a bathtub was located across the north end of the bathroom, the sink in the southeast corner and the toilet in the southwest corner. Remnants of knob-and-tube wiring (with cylindrical knobs) and porcelain light fixtures indicate that the building was electrically lighted; there are also two electrical outlets in the kitchen.

On the interior of the north addition, the floor comprises boards oriented north to south, covered by plywood and then sheets of resilient flooring (of the same pattern and colors as the bathroom). The small west addition floor is finished with 5-1/2"-wide boards oriented north to south. The walls and ceiling of the main room are finished with plywood and a baseboard similar to that used in the south section. The interior walls of the small addition are formed the original shingled exterior of the south wing on the east wall, horizontal beadboard on the south wall, and exposed framing on the west wall. A square, framed hole in the roof of this room is of uncertain purpose.

History: See the Narrative Overview in HAER No. NV-46 for a broad contextual history.

The supervisor's office was erected on the site by TBDC in 1926. The south section is the original part of the building and it may have been constructed on site. However, it's also possible that it was constructed earlier and trucked to the site from a different location, perhaps the company's holdings in Tonopah. Differences in construction

methods and materials raise this possibility: the mill, power house (NV-46-B), and boardinghouse (NV-46-I) were all definitively built on site and display a very standard six-over-six-light wood window as well as corrugated siding or boards and battens for wall finishes. This idea is bolstered by similarities between the supervisor's office and the south section of the assay office (including wood shingles for walls and roof, sliding windows, and the use of pressed wood board for interior finishes), which was most likely moved to the site. The relocation and reuse of buildings of this size and even much larger was an extremely common practice in Nevada at the time. There is only one vague mention of the construction of the supervisor's office in the newspaper accounts in 1926, when it was reported that "the bunk house is practically finished as is the assay office and other necessary buildings."<sup>1</sup> By contrast, there are fairly detailed accounts of the mill, power house, and boardinghouse construction, a further indication that the supervisor's office might not have been newly built. The TBDC mine supervisor from 1926 until at least 1928 was Charles Mayotte and the building would have been his office; he most likely lived in one of the four residences present at the mill site at this time.<sup>2</sup>

Two photographs from ca. 1940 provide views of the building's south wall and the north end of the east wall (see Figures 3 and 4). The north addition is not present, nor is the bank of windows in the east wall. The 1952 tax receipt still itemized an office building at the mill site but in 1953 the building was reclassified as a house, a status it retained to the present.<sup>3</sup> This most likely marks the time when extensive alterations were made to the supervisor's office, including the installation of a kitchen and bathroom, window reconfiguration on the east and west sides, and a bedroom addition on the north end.

The property owner at the time was Don A. Jennings, who purchased the mine and mill site claims in 1949 and worked the property during the 1950s. Jennings (and perhaps his wife Blanca) may have lived in the newly renovated building seasonally or year-round, but it may also have been used by the Andrew Dowd, a mining engineer employed at the site at least until 1956, and his wife Ermyl. According to oral accounts, the couple had lived and worked at the Belmont Mill site as early as 1945, perhaps as employees of the owners or as unofficial lessees, and also as caretakers.<sup>4</sup>

In April 1957, Jennings sold a lease and option to purchase the mill site claims to the Hamilton Land Co.; the agreement was to be valid through August 1962.<sup>5</sup> This is also the year when Jennings' address on tax receipts changed from nearby Ely, Nevada, to

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<sup>1</sup> Ely Daily Times, May 19, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> A list of registered voters in the Hamilton area that was published in The Ely Record on October 26, 1928, indicated that Mayotte and his wife Mary were still living in the district, and were most likely living in one of the four residences at the mill site.

<sup>3</sup> White Pine County Records, Tax Receipts, 1952-present.

<sup>4</sup> Interviews with Hal Jensen and Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., 1 October 2010. Andrew Dowd was mentioned definitively in association with the Belmont mine in 1956. See L. E. Davis et al., "The Mineral Industry of Nevada," in US Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook Area Reports, 1956, Vol. III (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1958), 761.

<sup>5</sup> A copy of the lease and option document could not be found; however, it was referenced in a notice of no-liability that Jennings filed in June 1957 (White Pine County Records, Instrument No. 107450).

California and the converted supervisor's office may have fallen into disuse at this time. Former Ely resident Rod Jensen recalls the period in the 1960s when the widowed Mrs. Dowd acted as the Belmont Mill caretaker. Jensen worked claims in the area between 1966 and 1969 with his father, and remembers that all six boardinghouse rooms were occupied by miners working area claims during the summer months, sometimes at double occupancy. No one roomed in the supervisor's office or the assay office, but Mrs. Dowd maintained flowerbeds in their front yards.<sup>6</sup>

After 1980, when a site caretaker was no longer employed, the supervisor's office was neither used nor maintained. Today the building is in fair condition. Loss of roof coverings has allowed water into the building and resulted in extensive damage of interior finishes. All windows and doors are missing, or nearly so, and many of the wood shingles have been stripped from the east of the north addition. The most serious problem is the displacement of the northwest corner post of the north addition, resulting in material loss and structural damage to the north and west walls in this area.

Sources: See HAER No. NV-46.

Historian: Anne Oliver, Principal, Oliver Conservation Group. Fieldwork for the project was conducted in the fall of 2010. Project documentation was accepted by HABS/HAER in 2011.

Project Information: See HAER No. NV-46 for complete details. In summary, this project was completed under a contract between the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and a consulting team under the direction of ajc architects (Salt Lake City, Utah), in consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. The project historian was Anne Oliver, historic preservation consultant with Oliver Conservation Group. Matt Wallace, intern architect with ajc architects, was responsible for the architectural measured drawings and completed all fieldwork and final drawings with the assistance of Oliver Smith Callis, draftsman. The photography was produced by Steve Tregeagle Photography under the direction of Steve Tregeagle and with the assistance of Heath Brown.

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr.